

In the Air Tonight by 14winters

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Summary:

A collection of standalone ficlets, meta, and headcanons on Stalancy, or Steve/Kali/Nancy/Jonathan, initially posted to tumblr.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

This is a polyship I hold very close to my heart, and I wish more people thought about how awesome these four would be together. I see Kali as closest to Nancy, and truly in love with her, while she views Jonathan and Steve more as bffs with benefits. They all love each other though. Nancy is equally in love with all of them, but she and Kali have a special bond.

Imagine Nancy cuddled on the Byers' couch with Steve, Kali, and Jonathan. Imagine how they have to arrange each other. Nancy is in the middle, cuz everyone always wants her there. Steve and Jonathan are on either side of her, and Kali, being so small, is just spread over Steve and Nancy's laps, her feet on Jonathan's lap (everyone knows Jonathan gives the best foot rubs. And they all thank him in various ways).

And they're all in pjs and slipper socks and Nancy is wearing a fluffy robe and Kali has borrowed one of Nancy's pj shirts and she's so adorable cuz it's even bigger on her. And Nancy is playing with Kali's hair, leaving a comb in Kali's lap as she tries out different braids. Steve has the remote and a bag of popcorn and they're just channel surfing, amiably arguing about what to watch. Kali wants horror, Nancy doesn't care as long as it doesn't have monsters in it, Steve wants a comedy, Jonathan just wants to snack on popcorn and watch his bf and gfs be cute.

2. After High School

Jonathan goes to NYU like he always dreamed, majoring in Photography & Imaging. Nancy and Steve move to New York with him and they get an apartment together. Jonathan of course tries to dissuade them, saying they shouldn't shape their education and the future of their careers around where he lives (something Joyce advised him to talk about with Nancy and Steve) but Nancy refuses to listen, saying she never cared where she went to school, as long as it was far away from Hawkins. And Steve just wants to get away from his father's company.

So they all move to New York and both Nancy and Steve go to community college. Nancy trains to be an EMT and then a paramedic, while Steve just focuses on his gen eds at first, not sure what he wants to do. Steve works at a bar and as a freelance musician, Jonathan works as a server and begins very quickly to get the odd photography job here and there, at weddings and other events. Nancy tries to take night classes as much as she can (if that's possible for an EMT in training), so she can have mornings off most of the time to be with her bfs. I like to imagine her getting a housekeeping job at a hotel just so she can investigate certain people who visit the hotel, the government agents and other important figures she suspects to be involved with the lab. Because we all know Nancy gets in league with El and Kali and her gang, and they all continue taking down the bad men. Whether you ship Kalancy or not (and you know I very much do) I really think Nancy and Kali would hit it off no matter what, and Nancy would want to help her adopted sister (cuz lbr she sees El as her sister already) in any way she could, and that would include becoming friends with Kali and using her fledgling investigative skills to continue taking down the evil lab.

Steve is awesome at making friends, and he quickly gets the reputation for being a great babysitter. A year or so into college he decides he wants to become a high school teacher.

I know this is all so specific I love planning out characters' lives it's really all I'm good at. But I'm gonna keep going.

So I imagine that while all this is going on, once they've gotten more

financially settled and have extra money set aside (cuz this is the 80s they can actually do that), Nancy, Steve, and Jonathan keep investigating together where other monsters might be escaping the Upside Down. And when they hear of something suspicious, or Hopper tells them of something he's heard, they go out and hunt those fuckers. They're the monster hunting trio they gotta.

And with help from Kali they find other children with gifts. Hopper and Joyce get dragged into all this too, and yknow, since the trio are all over 18 at this point, Hopper and Joyce can't really stop them from going out and hunting monsters and putting themselves in harm's way to take down the bad men. And Nancy has got EMT training, has badass sniper skills partly thanks to Hopper, and the three of them would die to protect each other.

And they've all got personal vendettas against this evil lab. Steve isn't related to the Byers or Wheelers by blood (thank goodness) but Jonathan and Nancy are his family, and so their siblings, and the rest of the party, El, Max, Lucas, and Dustin, are his family too. The lab and the Upside Down are still a threat to all of them. And Kali becomes part of their family too. Kali would do anything to protect El, and soon she's in love with Nancy so they all got big stakes in this game. So *of course* we're still getting our monster hunting trio.

Before season 2 came out, I wrote very similar outcomes for the trio's careers, and I wanted them all to move to South Africa where Jonathan got this big wildlife photography job (probably with National Geographic) and El and Mike were gonna have their honeymoon in South Africa so they could visit the MHT at the same time. And of course there are monsters to hunt throughout South Africa and beyond, who are we kidding this shit is global. My trio are heroes. And now Kali is Nancy's wife and they kick ass together.

3. City Life

And like, Kali would be so cool with the polyamory? She does have vague memories of her parents, but nothing concrete. She probably didn't live long with a traditional family, the one she told El about. And while hunting down the bad men in her mission of vengeance, who has time for a traditional dating life? Pfft. Kali would be sooo cool with being in a poly relationship. And she's a city girl. Imagine her showing Stoncy the sights, in Chicago, in Pittsburgh, in New York when Jonathan goes to college there and Stoncy is living in an apartment together?

Since she's on her mission of vengeance, she doesn't really settle down. But imagine her just crashing at Stoncy's apartment every once in a while. They all smoke weed together and Nancy makes a dessert for them all. Kali helps them find the best bars and clubs. Jonathan making her part of some of his photography projects. Steve and Kali record songs together (I hc Steve gets into being a freelance musician after high school). Nancy and Kali share makeup tips and exchange clothes.

Kali helps them all find the best place to get tattoos. Because you can't tell me Kali doesn't get tattoos of her own. Jonathan would have to get a meaningful tattoo. Steve would get something dramatic on his chest and forearm, something super colorful. And I just want Nancy to have a sleeve, okay. Kali helps her design a lot of her tattoos.

4. Freshmen and Seniors

I think Kali escaped the lab younger than El was when she escaped. She also mentioned living with “normal” people for a while, so she might have had some schooling then. But we don’t know what kind. Considering both she and El were kept prisoner in the lab, and escaped, Kali probably wouldn’t have been safe to go to a public school, just like El wasn’t safe to go, well, anywhere after the events of season 1.

We’re not told in canon, but I think Kali looks to be four years older than El, so 17. So she’d likely be behind in her schooling regardless. I imagine if she was able to settle with Steve, Nancy, and Jonathan, she’d be in New York with them where Jonathan would go to college at NYU. I picture Nancy and Steve starting off at community college, and Kali would start earning her GED. Of course Kali is still hellbent on finding the remnants of the lab, so she would need some encouragement to also focus on school. Nancy would be the one to encourage her the most. Kali listens to Nancy the best, because Nancy was the easiest for Kali to trust after El. Nancy is also the best study buddy, because she’s the most patient with schoolwork, the most organized. Jonathan works better alone, and Steve is the least academic of them. Kali has the best street smarts, of course.

I imagine Nancy would be the one to organize how and when they could study together, and Steve would come up with the reward system, much like we saw him do with Nancy in season 1. She denied his offer then, but she doesn’t anymore. ;)

Like, I love imagining the four of them going to the university library together. Steve and Kali have the most trouble focusing. Steve is making dirty jokes in low whispers to all of them in turn, seeing who he can get to laugh out loud first. Kali is trying to distract Nancy by making her see things out of the corner of her eye - usually a butterfly, but also Kali loves to make her gf and bfs imagine each other without clothes on in public. Nancy tries to keep them on track until at least Steve or Kali get *one* assignment at least *halfway* finished, but she’s suppressing smiles and giggles the whole time. Kali is sketching tattoo ideas in the margins of her

notebook. Steve has to start jamming on his Walkman at some point, doing an air guitar at least once. He can't stand silence for long, much like Jonathan. Jonathan's the one to lean over and whisper in Nancy's ear, suggesting they all go back to the stacks and make out. (I love the movie *The Prince and Me*, okay)

However, if Kali were to be in Hawkins during Nancy's and Jonathan's senior year, let's say if she caught up in summer school and started attending with them senior year, she'd be a horrible influence and Nancy and Jonathan would love her even more for it. She'd have science (chemistry ideally) class with Jonathan and gym class with Nancy.

Kali would get such a kick out of making other students imagine their chemistry projects were doing weird shit. And she'd let Jonathan see what she was doing. Kali wouldn't be able to make his camera see things that weren't there, but she and him would still spend a lot of time together brainstorming, because they both have creative minds, and a way of seeing the world differently than most. Kali because she's had to use her gift to survive, and is good at noticing what will make people react the way she wants. This complements Jonathan's gift for photography perfectly, because he has a talent for capturing people in certain moments. They love people watching, making up ideas about the other students. Their favorite thing to do together is sit outside before school starts, when everyone is milling about, Jonathan with his camera, and Kali picking out people and making them see different things so Jonathan can get cool photos.

Nancy and Kali in gym class. These girls have the most chemistry, and Kali knows it. Nancy can't count how many times she'd walk into the locker room to do a double take at Kali because Kali will make Nancy see her naked for a split second and it always gets Nancy hot and bothered. Kali can't only make people see things in real time, she can also make people see things she wants to happen. (Yep, just made that up. Can't stop me.) So yeah, she loves inspiring Nancy's imagination in a very different way than Jonathan's.

Also, Nancy loves helping Kali fix her makeup after gym class. And Kali loves braiding or styling Nancy's short hair for her before class, and helping her comb it after they shower.

Kali skips with Steve a lot. Steve gets a job at the mechanic's shop in Hawkins during Nancy, Jonathan, and Kali's senior year, and takes night classes at the nearby community college. But the rare day he's not working early in the day, Kali will skip and meet Steve in the school parking lot. Sometimes Jonathan is with her, sometimes Nancy, but they agree the three of them can't all skip together, it'd be too suspicious. So they have to alternate. Kali always asks Nancy or Jonathan if they're okay with helping her catch up with whatever classes she's skipping, so she doesn't overload them. They're all on the same curriculum so it's usually pretty easy for at least one of them to skip with Steve once in a while.

Kali is a bit of a grease monkey herself (like she had to have learned how to repair cars at some point, being on the run with her gang all the time), so she and Steve talk a lot about cars and motorcycles. She loves getting her hands dirty in the mechanics garage with him. And she loves making him take his shirt off while he works (which he usually doesn't mind because it can be hot work).

Kali helping Steve wash grease out of his hair because they started making out on the hood of a car he was supposed to be repairing.

Also, two words. Car sex. Only in Steve or Jonathan's car of course. Jonathan always brings the perfect mix tapes. Steve ends up having so many of them in his car he comes by Jonathan's one day and is like "dude where do you keep all these? When did you make this one? Can you combine these songs on a new mixtape cuz damn." I love Steve and Jonathan nerding out about music together. They have very different tastes but Steve can appreciate a greater variety than Jonathan can, and often tries new music out on his bf. Kali and Jonathan are the metalheads.

Making bonfires in the junkyard and getting crossfaded is their favorite thing to do together at this time in their lives. Kali and Nancy dancing in their underwear while an awesome mix tape blasts from Jonathan's car stereo. All their hands getting sticky with roasted marshmallows. Steve usually ends up using Jonathan as a pillow. Kali giving Nancy a piggy back ride just so she can prove she can even though she's the shorter of them. Jonathan taking pictures of them all and later he, Nancy, and Kali develop them together in the school's dark room and crack up together over the memories of that night.

Kali is the first one to dare take Jonathan's camera from him and take pictures of him, on one of these wild nights in the junkyard. He's so crossfaded he just laughs and laughs and none of them ever get tired of those pictures of him, his smile lit only by firelight. Nancy tries to get it framed but Jonathan refuses to let her.

5. Coffee

Nancy likes very strong coffee with lots of sugar and some half and half. Kali likes the same but with flavored creamer. Steve takes it with tons of flavored creamer. Jonathan takes it with just half and half.

After a few weeks and a lot of sleepovers at the Byers', everyone has their own mug. Jonathan's is a plain forest green, Nancy's is purple with a flowery pattern, Kali's is one that used to be at the Wheeler's, red with white polka dots, and Steve's is white with a black stripe towards the top. (Joyce always knows who got up last by how the mugs are washed. The poly quartet has a rule that whoever gets up last does the dishes after breakfast. It's usually Steve, but sometimes Kali or Nancy. Steve stacks them two-by-two on the counter. Kali puts them separately upside down on the counter. Nancy lines them side by side upright against the wall by the sink.)

Nancy and Jonathan like their coffee after breakfast, Kali before breakfast, and Steve doesn't care.

I've said before that Kali "knows" coffee and she and Nancy are coffee people. Kali and Steve are definitely the night owls, and so is Nancy to an extent, but ever since the events of November 1983, she doesn't sleep much overall. Jonathan is the only morning person.

One night after they'd all stayed the night at the Byers', Kali discovered Jonathan's coffee making skills were not quite up to par (by her city slicker standards, as Steve put it). So Kali proceeded to brew another pot for them all and Nancy proceeded to fall even more in love with her.

When it's just Kali and Jonathan in the house—while Steve and Nancy go grocery shopping (Steve loves it, and they know Jonathan wants a break from doing errands for his family)—Jonathan asks Kali to teach him how to brew coffee like she does.

Jonathan has only ever made coffee for his mom and meals for her and Will, so he's still learning the tastes and preferences of his gfs and bf. So the next time Nancy stays the night Jonathan makes the

coffee like Kali advised him and gets the warmest feeling in his chest at seeing the look of blissful satisfaction on Nancy's face.

Steve loves grocery shopping with Nancy because he knows she enjoys it nearly as much as he does. For Jonathan it's just any other chore for his family, and Kali never had to and is low on patience. Nancy loves it because she loves cooking and baking and feeding people. And shopping helps her get meal ideas. Nancy makes up the list and keeps them on track while Steve drives the cart, gets the stuff on high shelves, and makes sure the bread and eggs don't get smushed.

6. Bisexuals

So I really love the idea of Nancy, Kali, Jonathan, and Steve all being bisexual. I will write some hcs about how I think Kali and Nancy realize they're attracted to the same gender.

Nancy is ten years old the first time she suspects. She loves certain female singers and starts getting obsessed with female bands and such. This goes into her teenage years. And she notices that she just loves how they look aesthetically and she never gets tired of looking at them. She makes scrapbooks and collages.

And then she never really wants to delve deeper until she's with Steve and loses Barb. For years she wonders at the true nature of her feelings for Barb. She also thinks a lot of her high school female friends are cute, but was never close to any of them except Barb. After Barb died she didn't want to deepen any of her female friendships, mostly due to her trauma and grief.

So after she gets with Steve and Jonathan she really wants to drown her grief in her love for them, so it's not till she meets Kali that she seriously considers her attraction to girls again.

(spoilers for the Kalancy fic I haven't finished) Kali doesn't mean to show her Barb - that was actually Nancy's mind connecting with Kali's, when they first met (already wrote this its the first - currently only - chapter of my Kalancy fic).

Kali understands her pain more than anyone has, even Jonathan. And for a while she's just grateful to have Kali as a friend. But then she starts getting visions, not dreams, actual visions, of the future. They always happen when she touches Kali or soon after they've been together. And they always have Kali in them. Kali unlocks something inside her, both supernatural and romantic. That sound so cheesy but I'm a cheesy fantasy writer at heart okay.

Kali didn't think about attraction to anyone for a long time, she was too focused on surviving, getting through her trauma after her escape, readjusting to new life after new life.

The first time she really was attracted to someone was Funshine. It was a crush, she never let anything come of it, and he respected her far too much to even consider such a thing.

Then she met Mick. Mick is one year older than her. They had their first wlv kiss together. But ultimately they wanted to remain just friends. Mick is the one Kali would trust with her life, next to only Funshine. Axel and Dottie are good people, but Kali does not trust them as much. Not with her life. Definitely not with any deeper feelings in her heart. She says very little to Funshine and Mick as it is.

Then El comes into her life. Jane. Her lost sister, someone she thought she would never see again. And then she meets El's family in Hawkins. Like [@sapphickaliprasad](#) said in her post on Kali, Kali is the only one who can call El "Jane", and El wants to be called El by everyone but Kali - the way you say it in the post hawkeyes-red-robe is perfect, totally matches my hc pretty much exactly.

So when Kali meets Nancy she accepts her just by virtue of Jane trusting Nancy. But she feels something strong between them from the very beginning. She's curious, but definitely not prepared for how attached she'll get to Nancy. Never in her life has someone gotten under her defenses so quickly, and completely unintentionally. What Kali was immediately drawn to in Nancy was her honesty, her courage, and her forthrightness. She never backed down, even when it wasn't in her best interest. Just like Kali.

Steve and Jonathan and Nancy and Kali all end up dating. This is a fact for me. Kali eventually is safe to stay in Hawkins when she needs to, to see Jane. But she ends up following her gf and bfs to New York City when Jonathan leaves for college. She mostly wanted to stay near Nancy, though she does not live with them except a few nights at a time. She goes back to Hawkins every couple months to see Jane for a few days, staying in Hopper's cabin now that Jane was free to live openly with Hopper as his daughter Jane 'Eleanor' Hopper (that's my hc about how they explain her nickname to society, that it's short for her middle name, Eleanor).

But the majority of the time she's in New York, sometimes in Chicago, seeing Mick and Funshine and making more connections to

help bring down more branches of the evil lab. As I've said in my first long Stalency hc post (answering the amazing [@pyromaniac-smartass](#)), Nancy helps Kali investigate the evil lab. She starts working in a hotel with a housekeeping job, spying on government agents and lab employees who visit there (its New York City, there's gonna be important people there).

Kali drives everywhere, or takes the bus, she never flies. When she and Nancy are 25, Kali gets a motorcycle. They love taking it out every summer. In 2017 they're those cool 40-something ladies with tons of tattoos and long colored hair with bright highlights, riding around double on a motorcycle and kissing and holding hands like the sweet middle-aged gay couple they are.

Kali and Jonathan would bond over music. And she and Jonathan would come up with photography projects together. Kali loves Jonathan's calmness. He's so soft and understanding, and their attraction to each other so straightforward, Kali loves being with him because it's like waking up fresh from a beautiful dream every time they're intimate with each other. Nancy and Kali and Steve all have talked about it, what it's like being with Jonathan, and they all describe it in such similar ways.

Kali and Steve are spitfires together. So snappy and protective, but also ready to take the stress out of things for the more solemn Jonathan and Nancy. They're the biggest risk takers. When Steve became a mechanic, Kali learned even more from him than she already knew through having to survive on the streets of big cities. They learned from each other. Both of them love to drive more than Nancy and Jonathan, and are total gear-heads. for Kali, being with Steve is like a roller-coaster, or swimming in the ocean. He's endlessly exciting in an obvious way, but also has hidden surprises that always intrigue her. Like the way he is so easy in social situations, yet completely flustered around Jonathan when they're even just a little tipsy, or Jonathan does something completely charming that makes Steve melt. His confidence and rakish charm isn't an act, but Kali notices how he can drop it around the three of them. It becomes more of a lighthearted facade for him when he's more relaxed.

Kali and Nancy are just, totally wrapped up in each other. Always.

When they're around each other it's difficult for them not to touch each other. Even just holding hands is vital to them, unless there's an explicit reason they have to be apart but in the same room/area. Jonathan and Steve are the only positive replacements for the other's touch. Nancy loves Jonathan and Steve as much as she loves Kali, but it's different. Kali knows her better than Jonathan and Steve ever can, through no fault of their own. Kali understands and knows her mind, and they feel like they are two halves sometimes, even tho they understand they are two whole people. It's how their minds connect. Kali only had a bond like that with her mother, who is long gone. And those memories are barely there. With Nancy, everything is always an adventure, but feels like home at the same time.

7. Hunting Monsters

They're all very protective of each other. But Kali and Steve take it to a whole other level.

This of course starts off with a ton of arguments. Steve doesn't like when any of them put themselves in danger, and is very vocal about it, but Kali is not about to let anyone stop her from getting what she wants. Jonathan is all about compromise, and Nancy is all about supporting Kali. Steve agrees to help them hunt down the bad men, on top of hunting inter-dimensional monsters, but only if Kali and Nancy teach him to shoot a gun as well as them.

Jonathan knows his strength does not lie in firearms. He's the one always watching their backs, coordinating the intricacies of the plan with Nancy, making sure bullets don't get fired at his girlfriends and boyfriend in the first place. Hopper is the one who teaches him the most hand-to-hand combat. Hopper teaches them all a few tricks, but focuses on teaching Jonathan the most. Jonathan may not be as tall as Steve, but he has more mass than his lankier boyfriend, and what he lacks in height he makes up for in muscle. Kali begins calling him their warrior, and she also gives Jonathan pointers on hand-to-hand combat that she learned from Funshine.

There are a lot of long car rides, to get to whatever residence of the bad man (or woman) they've targeted, to capture (if Hopper can convince them) or kill. Kali and Nancy do the most navigating, while Jonathan and Steve do the most driving.

Kali and Nancy are the ones who are best at finding these people. El, who's now started high school with Max and the boys, does still help them, but they try not to need her help very often. Kali doesn't want to take the small pocket of normalcy that Jane's found from her, if she can help it. But if Kali and Nancy hit a dead end, and even Hopper can't help them, they entreat El to give them a push in the right direction.

But Nancy and Kali, along with Hopper's more developed detective skills and connections, usually manage very well on their own. Nancy's job as a housekeeper in a 5 star hotel in New York City has

gotten her a lot of information they would've never gotten otherwise, or would've taken much longer to get. She has a memory that comes close to equaling Kali's (and Kali's memory is very much aided by her gift), and can remember names and faces equally well. Her mother Karen taught her the basics of picking locks, and Kali helped her hone these skills. She sneaks wherever she wants, and Kali helps her manipulate the security system (and the security personnel) of the hotel so they can go wherever they need to, and get whatever information they need to.

When they actually go to kill a monster, from the lab or the Upside Down, Steve and Kali work together to manipulate the situation to fit their needs. Whether it's the people from the lab, or any obstacle in tracking the monsters, Steve can charm the pants off anyone if you give him the right set-up, and they always do. He's acted as several different types of repair man, delivery man, lost or confused civilian. They do everything they can not to lure the cops, something Kali couldn't manage with her gang before—they just didn't have the resources.

And Kali had far less patience then. Finding Nancy gave her something she'd never really had—both stability and someone she could trust to pursue their goal just as adamantly as she needed to. They both had equal stakes. They didn't compare their trauma, Nancy implicitly understood her pain was not equal to Kali's, but they knew they understood each other's pain and need for vengeance. And while Kali knew her sister Jane could understand her pain even more, she also understood Jane did not need what Kali needed, and should not be forced to live the life Kali had chosen. Kali wanted to leave Jane to do as she chose, to live whatever life that gave her the most happiness. She had learned that did not mean continuing to hunt down the bad men, as Kali wanted to do.

Nancy's training as an EMT gives her an edge over how to subdue their targets, if they want to keep them alive (the Upside Down monsters they never do). Jonathan, or Jonathan and Steve together, usually do the actual subduing. During these operations, Steve and Jonathan mainly act as the bodyguards, the protectors. Steve usually goes in first, Jonathan usually leaves last. Jonathan has the best eye for detail, similar to Kali—they both can spot something seemingly

insignificant and manipulate it to their advantage. Whether they kill or capture, he makes sure it's done in a way that will leave the least evidence, so nothing can be traced back to them. He and Nancy research together how to safely keep someone unconscious, how to treat concussions and gunshot wounds and shock, how to tie knots that won't come loose, and how to give stitches. Jonathan didn't want Nancy to be the only one with this sort of knowledge, so he learns at least the most basic of these skills so he can help her.

Kali and Steve are the hotheads, but they also work the best with each other. Nancy is their offense, their firepower. Jonathan is their protector, their eyes. Steve is what Kali calls a soldier, their first defense. He doesn't enjoy the fight (that would be Kali and Nancy) but he wants to be the first to put himself in danger, so the rest of them won't. That's mainly why he and Kali argue so often. Kali wanted him to back down, until she realized they could be the best first defense together. Steve can read people physically better than anyone Kali's ever seen, save perhaps Funshine, and Brenner. He knows where to strike before the other person can make a move. It's more than just knowing hand-to-hand combat, it's knowing how to read an opponent better than they read you. For Steve this is a natural skill, and for that reason, Kali keeps him by her side when their enemy is right in front of them. She trusts Nancy and Jonathan to have their backs, and she trusts Steve to be at her side. Because sometimes he sees things in their target even quicker than she can.

It's when they go back to the hotel or motel, after a long pay phone conversation with Hopper, a secret drop off point where they leave the unconscious body, that they all surrender to emotions, in different ways. Kali and Jonathan are strangely quiet, while Nancy and Steve are strangely loud. From the driver's seat, Jonathan cranks up the music, Steve sings badly to nearly every song, and Nancy fusses over all of them. She's the one with the first aid kit, and the most knowledge. If there are bruises she ices them, if there are cuts she bandages them. If there are worse injuries, she's already the paramedic she's being trained to become.

And Kali is the one to watch each of them closer than they suspect, and find who needs the most attention, on the inside. If it's Jonathan, it's usually because one of the others got hurt worse than him, and

he's drowning in guilt. If it's Steve, he's had to see one of the others be in extreme pain, and he can't give voice to his own pain without fear of seeming selfish. He becomes a worse mother hen than Nancy, when really he's the one that needs comfort, and is afraid to ask for it.

Nancy, if she is suffering, it is usually for Kali. Kali knows Nancy wishes she could fight all her demons for her, like she wishes she could have saved Barb a thousand times over, turned back time and reversed every mistake she ever made. Nancy wants to save everyone, and deep down she knows she can't. Kali sees that clearer than anyone, and knows how to bring Nancy out of that darkness, at least partially. Because Nancy was the first to try bringing Kali out of her own darkness.

After long hot showers in the hotel, sometimes four separate ones, sometimes two, sometimes one messy bath time with all of them washing each other's hair, the four of them will lie down with the two beds pushed together. Their conversation will go from chatting, to deep and serious, to lighthearted again. Kali or Nancy will inevitably mention their newest lead on finding the next stolen child. The ones Kali suspects might still be alive. 009. 006. And 004. And when they eventually find them, what they'll do. What Hopper will do.

And eventually this day comes and Kali is confronted again with the question—how long can she do this? She knows Steve wants to settle down the most. Jonathan will soon have a career, and she will not hold him back. Nancy makes it the hardest, because Kali knows Nancy will go to the ends of the earth for her. Nancy wants to save people, but knows the saving only goes so deep. Kali understands this. And they have already found each other, they won't separate for anything. Kali knows this too, and knows she can't put her vengeance first anymore. Soon she makes the choice to stop hunting, so she and Nancy can heal together in a different way. When they find 009, Kali is 22 years old. The four of them have been hunting together for six years. Not constantly. There were breaks for school, studying and tests, big projects, visits to Hawkins, Christmases, birthdays, Joyce and Hopper's wedding.

But when they find 009, when Jane and Kali see those same eyes

staring back at them for the second time, something in Kali shifts. She knows the fight isn't over, but her place in it has to change. She looks at Nancy, at the woman she loves most in the world, and knows the answer has been in front of her for a long time. She wants to fight to save, not to kill.

The need for vengeance is still there, it always will be. But Jane, and 009, and Nancy, they soften that need until murder isn't all that gets her to sleep at night. She has Jane's deep understanding, the need to protect her and 009. She has Nancy's undying love and support, and a different sort of understanding, one that comes with an endless electricity between them, whenever they touch or even look at each other. And she has Steve and Jonathan, who love her differently, but still love her. She would not only kill for them all, but die for them. And that's what makes her stop wanting to kill. She has too much to protect.

And she has family. Not just Funshine, Mick, Dottie, and Axel, who she stays in contact with until their dying days. But Hopper, Joyce, and Jane's friends, all but siblings. Save for Mike, who Kali sees so much of herself in. She's now their daughter, their sister, and they accept everything about her. Not just her anger, her trauma, her gift. But her need for their love. That need is stronger than her need for vengeance. It was Nancy that first showed her how to love someone outside of her trauma. And it was love for her found family that showed her vengeance didn't have to be achieved through bloodshed alone.

8. Holding Each Other Up

Omg imagine how happy Steve, Jonathan, Kali, and Nancy are that they can be gay *together*? They're all bisexual, all attracted to each other, and they all accept each other for who they are. I think this is the biggest reason I'm so attached to them all. Each one of them is relatable and strong but also fallible and they struggle and their emotions and reactions are so realistic. And they live my dream life, polyamorous stoners hunting down evil government entities and literally killing monsters, some of them from another dimension. Like, my little bisexual heart can't take it. Therefore I must ramble on this site about them nearly every day.

So like, imagine Nancy and Kali watching Steve and Jonathan make out. And imagine Jonathan and Steve watching Kali and Nancy make out. And they're all so *into it*. Like I just picture them in some clearing in the woods, and it's summer 1986 or 1987, and they're on vacation from school and their busy New York lives, in the country outside of Hawkins, just being together and young and happy and in love.

And Kali and Steve and Nancy going out for ice cream while Jonathan is at work at the movie theater, and they sneak in during a showing and give him a sundae to enjoy in the stock room. And there are sticky sugary kisses and Nancy has to help Jonathan get a chocolate and cherry juice stain off his shirt before he goes back to work, and Kali says she can just hang around and make sure no one notices it.

So Steve, Kali, and Nancy hang out in the lobby of the theater, snacking on a large popcorn and keeping Jonathan entertained during dead times.

Steve loves picking all of them up. Kali because she's the shortest and always laughs when he picks her up, not even able to be mock angry at him. And she gives the hottest kisses after he puts her down. Jonathan because he always has the best reactions—he's either too stunned to speak, or he gets immediately flustered and it becomes a pure delight kissing him after Steve sets him down. Nancy because he loves feeling the strength in her combined with her softness—she's small but built like him, all wirey muscle and thin arms and legs. She

always grasps the nape of his neck and runs her fingers through his hair in the best way.

9. Hair Care Habits

Steve and Kali have a very detailed haircare routine. Within the first few days after meeting each other, that's one of the first things they talk about. Steve is like, what made you decide to shave your head like that? And he's not judgmental when he asks at all, he just thinks it looks cool, he's never seen anyone with hair like that except on TV. And of course Kali answers bluntly, as she does. That it's to remind her of how the evil lab abused her, to remind her she will always seek vengeance for how they hurt her and others.

And Steve's like, "Oh. That's cool." And he tells her he uses Farrah Fawcett hairspray, feeling he should at least answer with his own secret, even though it's nothing close to what Kali just said.

And she's like "I wouldn't have guessed, your hair looks so soft." And he kinda just stares at her, flustered, and Kali smirks at him (and the ot4 is already in motion I love my poly bbs).

Nancy doesn't do a lot to her hair. She puts oil on the ends, to prevent split ends. And she'll sometimes put some mousse in it, if she feels like it. But she's a wash and run kind of person. Kali loves when Nancy leaves it down, so she can run her fingers through it. If Nancy ever has it up, usually in that half-ponytail on top of her head, as soon as she and Kali are in private, Kali pulls the scrunchie out and delights in running her fingers through Nancy's soft, natural curls. A couple years into college, Nancy decides to let it grow past her shoulders, mostly because she enjoys Kali and her boyfriends playing with her hair too much. As it gets longer she's still fond of using hairpins to pin it up behind her ears, but leaving most of it loose.

Jonathan is also a wash and run kind of person. Taking care of his mom and Will, having a part time job to help support his family, haircare was the last thing on his mind. So when he becomes closer with Steve and Kali, he finds their more detailed haircare routine a bit amusing. Of course he doesn't mind it, he loves how they look. He's the one who loves playing with the others' hair the most, especially Steve's. One of his favorite memories is the four of them taking a bath in Steve's parents' huge master bathroom with the Jacuzzi when Steve's parents weren't home. And Steve let Jonathan

wash his hair, while Nancy braided Kali's, and they were all a bit drunk and just laughing uncontrollably.

Nancy loves helping Kali with her haircare routine. She always gets ready faster than her girlfriend, so has the extra time. And the two of them thrive on any sort of contact. Sometimes Nancy will straighten Kali's hair for her with the flat iron, and Kali's taught her how she colors her hair so Nancy knows what to buy when Kali needs to touch up her purple highlights. The first time Kali trusted Nancy enough to let her shave her undercut, Nancy was so slow and careful. And when Kali told her she did well Nancy practically glowed.

Nancy teaches Jonathan different braiding styles, and Kali loves letting them both braid her hair. Steve doesn't have as much patience for doing braids, but he and Kali will share hair styling tips with each other. Steve is the one who brings home random haircare and styling products for Kali or himself to try.

When the four of them live in New York City together, and go out to bars or clubs, Kali is of course the one to help everyone get ready. She helps Steve and Jonathan put on dark eyeliner, and does everyone's hair. Nancy loves using the spray-on, washout dye the most, and usually chooses purple to match her girlfriend. Kali helps Jonathan gel his hair, which Jonathan never really gets used to doing on his own, so he appreciates her help. Kali doesn't have to help Steve, but she'll often suggest he try something different. Everyone loves playing with Steve's hair, and Steve knows Kali has a creative mind and can do things with hair he's never thought of, so he usually lets her experiment on him.

Lowkey want Kali to have a job as a hair and makeup stylist at some point in her 20s, because I imagine she would love a job that was hands-on like that. It wouldn't be a longtime career for her, but something she'd definitely dabble in as a hobby even after it wasn't a job anymore.

Notes for the Chapter:

My hc about Kali styling the others' hair is definitely inspired by @sapphickaliprasad's amazingly epic Kali headcanon post [here](#), it is such a beautiful read,

please give it a look if you can.

10. Chapter 10

Nancy is thin gold chains, soft sweaters, glittering wet lip gloss. Gentle curls, natural looking makeup, pale lace, slipper socks. She's also small hands with a strong grip, the cold hardness of metal, the steel gaze of eyes locked on a target. Snapping words and indignant anger, determined intelligence beneath a veneer of demure unassuming grace.

Kali is the chill the goes up the spine in a dark room, a vise-like grip on the arm, commands spoken with stern confidence. The smell of leather, combat boots, oil stained clothes. Kali is also a warm touch on the shoulder, instilling comfort and strength. The heat of a fire in a cold night. The feeling when the reassurance of shelter comes in the form of a person.

Steve is nails in a baseball bat, athletic strength and speed, cocky words and rash decisions. Scattered freckles on tan skin, soft untamed hair that begs to be touched, large hands that beg to be held. He's also the steady constancy of loyal friendship, arrogance masking the fear of rejection. A bundle of contradictions wrapped in a warm, disarming smile.

Jonathan is the sleek intricacy of a camera, the quiet consideration of an artist, the cool distance of an outcast. Sloppy, flat hair, an unwavering assessing gaze, long silences spent in contemplation. He is also the determined confidence of someone who has known worse pain than most, and survived with anger and kindness becoming close companions. Both are his guides, and he knows how to control one without losing sight of the other.